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THE LEGAL PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY

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THE LEGAL PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY

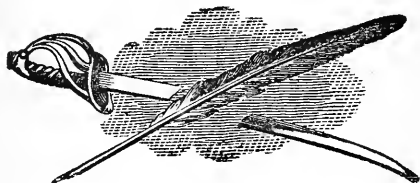
— A PAPER —

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BY

index
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SECRETARY CONNECTICUT BOARD OF EDUCATION.



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THE LEGAL PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY.

POWER OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT.

Public sentiment is a growing power the world over. In our country its influence is most marked. Here it creates law and repeals it. A law in violation of public sentiment is a dead letter, and therefore demoralizing, for laws habitually violated tend to lawlessness. Reverence for law is a wholesome sentiment, which should be early implanted in the juvenile mind. Laws in reference alike to the support of schools or attendance upon them must depend largely upon public sentiment. Laws, just and right in themselves, and adapted, if sustained, to promote the greatest good of the greatest number, may yet fail utterly from the want of popular sympathy and support. The question, therefore, of the expediency of compulsory attendance at school in any given State depends on the enlightened public sentiment of that community.

Wherever good schools have been so long maintained that the people generally regard them as essential to their individual thrift and happiness and to public security, morality, and prosperity, laws for the prevention of illiteracy may be wisely enacted. In those States where free public schools are still a novelty, or where illiteracy most abounds, where multitudes appreciate neither the advantages of education nor the evils of ignorance, compulsory attendance would be premature and impracticable.

But in those States where the traditions of the people from their earliest history have fostered the general appreciation of common-school education as their most precious

heritage, as the source of their success and prosperity, as indispensable to their future growth, as essential to skilled industry, as the cheapest police-agency, education comes at length to be recognized as the universal right, duty, and interest of man. If the State has a right to provide for any internal improvements, it has the right to provide for that education which is the condition of all progress. If the State may enforce regulations for the health of the body, it may do the same for the mind. If the State has a right to hang a criminal, it has a better right to prevent his crime by proper culture. The right to imprison and to execute implies the right to use the best means to prevent the need of either.

In Connecticut public sentiment is steadily growing in favor of the legal prevention of illiteracy. Stringent as are our laws on this subject, they have awakened no public opposition. A few individual malcontents among recent immigrants, mostly from Canada, have complained because their children could not be continuously employed in our factories. A few parents — I have not heard of a dozen in all — openly defied the law, but as soon as they found that the law was imperative and the school officers in earnest and that legal complaints were made out against them, they were glad to stay proceedings by compliance with its provisions. The circulation of printed blank forms of complaint against negligent parents proves useful. Under this law we have had as yet no prosecutions and no penalties. We hope there will be none.

It has been my constant desire to awaken a better appreciation of education in all parts of the State, knowing well that the condition of the schools everywhere answers to the public sentiment of each community. To intensify this interest I have mingled much with the people and lectured in every township of Connecticut, and in most of them repeatedly. In all these lectures it has been my aim, so far as in my power, to make the public school the center

of attraction and interest, so that attendance shall be regarded as a privilege rather than a legal necessity.

METHODS AND RESULTS.

The methods and results of our proceedings under the new laws of obligatory education are worthy of notice. These laws relate both to employers and parents. The law in regard to employers was adopted in 1869. That form of compulsory education has been in force for five years. An earlier law, copied *verbatim* from a Massachusetts statute, pronounced its penalty against all manufacturers who should "*knowingly* employ children who had not attended school," etc. That one word "*knowingly*" utterly vitiated the law. It was inserted as an amendment to the original bill on its second reading in the Massachusetts senate, at the suggestion of a manufacturer who knew well "how not to do it." The Massachusetts law still retains that unfortunate word. Practically, it is found impossible to prove the employer's knowledge of the child's non-attendance. "Not to know" is always easy for an employer.

Our law originally applied to manufacturers *only*. As revised, it relates equally to all employers. According to its provisions, no child under 14 years of age can be lawfully employed to labor *in any business whatsoever*, unless such child shall have attended some school at least three months in each year of such service. The penalty for the violation of this law is one hundred dollars for each offense.

Realizing that the efficiency of the law would depend largely on the department of education, the Board determined it should not be a dead letter; but instead of threatening prosecutions at the outset, we sought to conciliate the manufacturers, conferring with them courteously as friends of education, and assuming that they would heartily coöperate in the enforcement of the law. To this end, I drew up the following pledge: "We hereby agree that we will employ no children under 14 years of age, except those

who are provided with a certificate from the local school officers of actual attendance at school the full term required by law." I first presented it to ex-Governor James E. English; then to Governor Marshall Jewell; next to the late ex-Governor William A. Buckingham, who—all extensive manufacturers—cheerfully signed it. I then started to get the signatures of manufacturers generally; but the work proved so great and important that a gentleman was appointed as Agent of the Board of Education to canvass the State. He visited the leading manufacturers throughout the State, and, with one exception, they cheerfully signed the above pledge. This law has proved beneficent in its results. During the five years of its operation it has met general and cordial approval and brought large numbers into our schools. There still occur instances of remissness and forgetfulness of the date when school attendance of particular children is again required as the condition of their further employment. A few manufacturers, perhaps, feel annoyed by the trouble this law occasions them. But as a rule, our manufacturers evidently approve its provisions. It is not believed that any of the signers intend to repudiate the pledge above cited. They have shown a degree of liberality and interest in education worthy of commendation. A courteous reminder from the Agent or Secretary of the Board has been sufficient to remedy occasional instances of inadvertency. But even here vigilance is necessary. The law is still evaded in some cases. Should it anywhere be openly violated, prosecutions should promptly follow every ineffectual remonstrance. I hereby renew the request long since made to the local school officers to communicate to me any facts they may know as to neglect in the schooling of children. A journey of the Agent or Secretary to the remotest district of the State would be amply compensated by the addition of a single child to the regular attendants at school. For the very purpose of increasing the attendance, the Agent is now chiefly occupied in visiting schools, school

officers, and manufacturers, and in some cases parents. This work, however, properly belongs to the School Visitors, and I respectfully call their attention to the following requirement of the law, and invite their hearty coöperation in this matter. "It shall be the duty of the School Visitors in every town, once or more in every year, to examine into the situation of the children employed in all manufacturing establishments in such town and ascertain whether all the provisions of this chapter are duly observed, and report all violations thereof to one of the grand jurors of the town."

School Visitors can render no more useful service to the State than by searching out the "absentees" and bringing them into school. The work may be humble, but if fitly done, the results will be broad and lasting.

Four years ago a law of compulsory attendance at school was passed applying to all *parents* of children who were employed to labor at any business in this State, and who were discharged for the purpose of attending school. This class of children was supposed to comprise nearly all "~~non~~-attendants." The next year this limitation was removed. Our law now requires that "*every* parent, guardian, or other person having control and charge of any child between the ages of 8 and 14 years, shall cause such child to attend *some public or private day-school* at least three months in each year, six weeks at least of which attendance shall be consecutive, *or to be instructed at home* at least three months in each year in the branches of education required to be taught in the public schools, unless the physical or mental condition of the child is such as to render such attendance inexpedient or impracticable." The penalty for the violation of the above provisions is a *fine of five dollars* "for every week, not exceeding thirteen weeks in any one year, during which any parent or guardian shall have failed to comply therewith." As French Canadians are very numerous in many of our manufacturing villages, printed posters in both French and English, giving the substance

of the law both in its application to parents and employers, were widely circulated and posted.

The following notice, neatly printed, was also sent to the manufacturers of the State, to be posted in some conspicuous place:

“In accordance with the statute of the legislature of 1869, no children under 14 years of age can hereafter be employed in this factory except those who present a certificate from the local school officers of actual attendance at school the full time required by law, which is ‘at least three months of the twelve next preceding any and every year in which such children shall be so employed.’”

Many evasions of this law also no doubt occur, but the masses approve its provisions, and mean that they shall be observed. Many children, at first attending school reluctantly and only under the coercion of the law, have at length become so interested in study and eager for improvement as to attend of their own accord far beyond the time required by law. Parents who once pleaded that they were “too poor to spare their children’s wages in the mill,” have expressed a new and strange pride in, and ambition for, their children’s progress. They have at length learned that their own ignorance is one cause of their poverty, and that education is essential to the thrift and prosperity of their children.

The more thoroughly this law is executed, the less of course will be the *average* attendance. The greater the number who attend school *only* the time required by law, the less will be the average for the whole year. Three months’ schooling a year is not enough, but it is a good beginning. “Half a loaf is better than no bread.” It is hoped that such interest in school and fondness for books will be awakened as to induce many to attend longer than the time required by law.

Our aggregate attendance last year was 95.65 per cent. of the whole number enumerated—the highest figures ever

reached in this State. The whole number enumerated in 1874 was 133,528; the whole number in schools of all kinds was 127,720; since 1869 the increase in enumeration is 9,878; since 1869 the increase in number registered at school is 19,908. The increase of attendance above the increase in enumeration is 10,030.

These figures are given not in any spirit of boasting for the past, but as an encouragement for the future. They show that here is an inviting field of labor. Much still remains to be done. This service must be continued. Like kitchen work, it does not *stay done*.

The result above named has cost work. We have visited all the towns, conferred with manufacturers and School Visitors, and sometimes with parents. We have entered the schools and invited the coöperation of teachers. The subject has been presented in our Institutes and in educational lectures in all parts of the State. We have not leaned upon the law alone, but it surely has been of great service. Both political parties favor it. No suggestion for its repeal has been made in the legislature, nor, so far as I know, in any caucus or public meeting in the State.

It is highly creditable to the intelligence of the people of Connecticut that they plainly sanction the legal prevention of illiteracy. The proudest fact in the early history of our State was the general interest in its common schools and the general intelligence of its citizens. These traditions are still a power with the people.

In any State where there are no such traditions and no such general and hearty appreciation of universal education, obligatory laws would be premature.

Equally ineffectual will such laws be in any State where the Department of Public Instruction is understood to have no faith in them. Though there be no open opposition, nor any public avowal of doubt or disapproval, if the State Superintendent of schools simply stands aloof and maintains a dignified reserve, the law will not be likely "to execute

itself." Firmness united with conciliation, watchful supervision, and *earnest work* are the conditions of success.

EDUCATION OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT.

Instead of falling back upon the law to do the whole work, we have made argument, persuasion, and conciliation our *main* reliance. Any statute which should lessen these primal forces I should deprecate. But with growing faith in moral suasion I prize the sterner sanctions of the law, to be used only as a *dernier ressort*, in cases otherwise incorrigible. When paternal pride, interest, or authority fails, and parental indifference or intemperance bars the way to school, legal coercion may be wisely employed.

Whatever may be true in monarchical governments, in *our* country there is every motive to kindness and conciliation in the execution of such a law. The plan is truly democratic, for its entire management is by the people and for the people, through school officers chosen by the people and responsible to the people. Such a law, in our country, should command popular sympathy far more than in any monarchy, for it is not pressed upon the people by some outside agency or higher power, but is their own work, embodying their judgment and preferences. The form of compulsory education which existed in Connecticut for more than a hundred and fifty years was not forced upon the people as "subjects." It was rather a living organism, of which they as "sovereigns" proudly claimed the paternity, growing up with their growth and recognized as the source of their strength and prosperity. After the utmost use of kindness, tact, and persuasion, and every effort to awaken a dormant parental pride, if not a sense of duty, and showing that education will promote their children's thrift and happiness through life, we find that such persuasions are the more effective when it is understood that the sanctions of the law might be employed. We have used the right to enforce mainly as an argument to persuade — an authori-

tative appeal to good sense and parental pride. As thus used, we know in Connecticut that our law has been a moral force. It is itself an effective advocate of education to the very class who need it most. It has already accomplished great good and brought into the schools many children who would otherwise have been absentees.

Many individual instances of neglect or evasion still occur, occasioned by poverty or indifference of parents, or by the oversight or selfishness of employers, who do not, however, deny the justice and necessity of the law. A good work has been initiated. As yet it is only begun. Constant work and constant watchfulness are now necessary. Still better results are desired and will be secured, if the School Visitors throughout the State heartily coöperate in this most important part of their work.

Since the adoption of our compulsory laws in 1869 and their modification in 1871 and '72, this question has been more prominently before the American people than ever before. In the Southern States obligatory education would yet be premature. In the older States, public sentiment is rapidly advancing in favor of the legal prevention of illiteracy. In some States, politicians are shy of it, and urge many objections.

OBLIGATORY EDUCATION ADOPTED EARLY IN CONNECTICUT.

It is an unfounded objection that compulsory education is monarchical in its origin and character. Massachusetts and Connecticut were the first States in the world that enacted and practically applied the principle of compulsory education. Two years after the peace of Westphalia, before Prussia existed as a kingdom, and while Frederick William was only elector of Brandenburg, in 1650—two hundred and twenty-five years ago—Connecticut adopted most rigid laws for coercive education. Substantially the same laws had been passed in Massachusetts even eight years earlier.

The selectmen in every town were then required to see that so much "*barbarism*" was not permitted in any family as that their children should not be able perfectly to read the English tongue, upon penalty of twenty shillings for each neglect therein. Repetition of the offense was punished with still higher fines or by taking children away from their parents and apprenticing them where they would be sure to be educated.

In the early history of Massachusetts and Connecticut this law was strictly executed. It was so heartily approved by the people, and the education of all children was so generally desired and secured, that attendance lost its involuntary character. Created by public opinion, it tended to deepen that sentiment. The demand that the barbarism of ignorance should not be tolerated, helped to make it disgraceful to keep even an apprentice from school. To bring up a child or ward in ignorance was shameful and *barbarous* in the eyes of the fathers of New England. This is still the sentiment of their genuine descendants. High appreciation of education is one of the most precious traditions of New England. This old law greatly aided both in awakening and perpetuating this public interest, and in fixing the habits, associations, and traditions of the people. For one hundred and seventy years after the adoption of this law an adult native of Connecticut, of sound mind, unable to read the English language, would have been looked upon as a prodigy. Such a citizen of the old New England stock I have never met in Connecticut, though I have mingled freely with the people in every part of the State. In this respect my experience is not peculiar. Many prominent citizens of wide acquaintance in business or official relations bear the same testimony. But recently immigration has caused startling figures of illiteracy, especially in our manufacturing centers. With this ignorance, as a matter of course, comes indifference to education, and hence the new need of coercion.

ARGUMENT FOR THE LAW.

Abstract arguments on the justice of such laws are no longer needed. The *right* of the State to enforce attendance is now seldom questioned. It is a corollary from the compulsory school-tax. The power that claims public money to educate all classes, may justly provide that such expenditure should not fail of its end through the vice, intemperance, or perverseness of parents. The State has the same right to compel the ignorant to learn that it has to compel the penurious to pay for that learning. Tax-payers pertinently say, "If you compel us, who have no children, to support schools for the good of the State, you must provide that the children fail not to share the advantages thus furnished."

“THE LABORING CLASSES WON’T STAND IT.”

The question really is one not of right, but of expediency. "The people will not bear compulsion," is the honest sentiment of many earnest friends of education. Seven years ago, I must confess, coercive measures seemed to me inconsistent with the spirit of our people and of our institutions. I would not now advocate compulsion in any State where such are still the general views of the people. But on this subject public sentiment is often misunderstood and the discernment of the masses is underrated. It is a significant fact that the labor unions, both in this country and in Europe, favor obligatory education. Mixing much with the laboring classes for the purpose of promoting school attendance, I have the best means of knowing their sentiments, and have been greatly encouraged by their appreciation of education, whether Americans, Germans, Swedes, or Irish.

"The laboring classes won't stand it," is a remark formerly made in Connecticut, and still repeated in the Middle and Western States. Disguise it as we may, this is the main objection. Hence the caution and timidity of many politicians on this subject. The present Mayor of one of

the cities of Connecticut, who is sagacious in reading public sentiment and an earnest advocate of educational progress, ably and successfully advocated our law on the floor of the House in 1871, and some of its most stringent provisions were made in an amendment suggested and supported by him. Another prominent member, who then dodged the question, now freely says he would gladly vote for this measure. This fact shows how the results have converted doubters to friends. The reaction threatened has not come. The masses are quick to see what is fitted and intended to promote their true interests. The workingmen of Connecticut believe in maintaining good schools and in ensuring attendance upon them. As a class, they strongly favor the legal prevention of illiteracy.

VIEWS OF THE WORKINGMEN OF EUROPE.

The same spirit is manifested by the various labor organizations of Europe, as the discussions and resolutions at their conventions clearly show. At the International Workingmen's Congress held at Lausanne, in Switzerland, the sentiment cordially adopted after full discussion was, "that education should be universal, *compulsory*, and national, but not denominational." In England they are earnestly advocating this measure. The opposition comes from the large farmers, and politicians, and property-holders. Attending the National Trades-Union Congress, held for five days at Nottingham, in 1872, I found that body strongly favoring such a law. One of the members, a leader in the labor-league movement, habitually addressing large assemblies of workingmen in all parts of that country, said he everywhere found among them great unanimity on this subject, and never heard the objection that obligatory education would be a usurpation of parental or popular rights. No man in England so fully represents the sentiments of that most oppressed and depressed class, the farm-laborers of England, as Joseph

Arch. He is a most earnest advocate of universal and compulsory education. Denied all early school advantages, his own bitter experience has taught him to condemn the virtual exclusion of children from school by their constant employment on farms or in factories. His motto is, "Child-labor means pauperism, crime, ignorance, immorality, and every evil." The latest reports from England show that school attendance has increased remarkably in those towns which adopted the compulsory system. The absence of all opposition from the lower classes and the good effects already witnessed are commending this measure to general favor.

The motto of the National Educational League, supported largely by the common people, is, "Education must be universal, unsectarian, and COMPULSORY." This was the unanimous sentiment expressed at the great annual meeting of this association held recently in Birmingham. The compulsory plan is now in operation for about 78 per cent. of the borough population of England, and, as a late number of the National Educational League says, it is working with great success and growing in public favor.

After many inquiries among the laboring classes in Germany, I could nowhere get from them any objection to compulsory education. They evidently favor it, and so generally regard the school as a privilege that attendance is voluntary, in fact, and few think of coercion.

GERMAN EXPERIENCE.

Said a resident of Dresden to the writer: "Were the question of compulsory attendance to be decided by a plebiscitum to-morrow, it would be sustained by an almost unanimous verdict." Long ago Fichte said: "It is the first step that costs. The first generation will be the only one upon which it will be necessary to use constraint; for those who will have received the proposed education will voluntarily send their children to school." Experience has verified this

prediction. The most recent school statistics of Germany show that school attendance is practically universal. "Among the conscripts of the districts purely German, hardly one in a hundred is without education; in Berlin, the proportion is *two in a thousand*; the average is raised to three per cent., by the drafts from the non-German districts."

FRENCH TESTIMONY.

The wisest men of France learned a needful lesson at Sedan. Says Professor Bréal of the College of France, in his recent work on public instruction: "We must take our model from our conquerors. Three-fourths of our children must be regarded as devoted to ignorance." Says M. Émile de Laveleye, in a review of popular instruction: "It is an indisputable fact that ignorance combined with universal suffrage was the immediate cause of the recent reverses of France." In 1872, Jules Simon, then Minister of Public Instruction, explained to me his bill for a new national system of education, in which compulsory attendance was a prominent feature. He said: "Prussia with obligatory instruction has conquered ignorance — a victory from which we are separated, after thirty years of effort, by nine hundred thousand children ignorant and neglected."

It is a significant fact that Guizot, during the last three years of his life, stoutly advocated that compulsory system which he successfully opposed when Minister of Public Instruction in 1833. The logic of events had refuted his old theory, that such "coërcion was the creature of centralization, and bore the marks of the convent and the barrack."

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE NOW UNIVERSAL IN SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland, the country most jealous of liberty and averse to any form of usurpation, has long maintained compulsory attendance in all her twenty-two cantons, except in four of the smallest. In the recent revision of her con-

stitution this law was made universal in its application. That country — proud of being so long the home of freedom in Europe, glorying in free schools, free speech, free press, free trade, freedom of traveling, and freedom of religion — has now chosen anew for all its people the system of compulsory attendance. These facts clearly show that the prepossessions of intelligent workingmen are not against obligatory education.

Director Max Wirth of Bern proudly claims that “no grown-up child exists in this Confederation, save an idiot here and there, who cannot read and write.” Till he is six, the Swiss child may only dream of school, as he sees his brother or sister going thither, before seven o’clock in summer and eight in winter. Swiss parents see to it that these shall be pleasant dreams. The school is the center of attraction and interest. Attendance is held as a privilege rather than a legal necessity. The law itself has invested the school with dignity and honor. “Attention to his school is not a formal business to a Switzer as it might be to a Briton and a Frank, but an engrossing duty from his cradle to his grave.”

My inspection of many schools in the leading countries of Europe led to the conclusion that Switzerland was unparalleled on the Continent for the progress of her schools during the last twenty-five years, and for popular interest in education. In proportion to her means and opportunities, she is doing better even than Germany. To confirm this view, I need cite but two of the many concurring witnesses. In a recent debate in the House of Commons, Dr. Playfair said: “In Switzerland, a once miserable peasantry has become happy, prosperous, and contented, and has been made so by an education much higher than has ever been attempted in this country.” M. Duruy, late Minister of Public Instruction in France, reported that “the effect of the national system of education in Switzerland had been to empty the poor-houses and jails.” The cost of education in Switzer-

land is for them immense, far greater than that of the army. In contrast, France spends fifteen times more for the army than for schools, and even in London, Vienna, and Berlin the war budgets are in excess of the education budgets.

More than any other country of Europe, Switzerland is the home of industry. Her mechanics are educated and skillful. Though hemmed in by mountains, without a seaport, with no coal, with costly transportation—all freight from the sea-board coming over foreign territory, she threatens the silk trade of Lyons, takes the ribbon trade of Coventry, rivals the English in muslin and delaine, and leads the world in watches and wood-carving. In the decade from 1860 to 1870, her exports of silk alone rose 147 per cent. in quantity and 132 in value. The Earl of Rosebery, President of the English Social Science Association, in his opening address at its last meeting, says that the cause of this rapid progress of Swiss manufacture is plainly "the complete and special education which she gives in primary schools and practical schools and trade schools and secondary schools and cantonal schools, all topped up by the great Polytechnic Institute at Zurich. The Swiss manufacturer lives simply; he is master of his business; and his workmen, with whom he is in perpetual contact, respect him for this. Master and servant have been at the same school learning their craft, and they know it thoroughly." Such is the character of that free people who have just voted to make compulsory education *universal*.

ENGLISH CONVERSIONS.

A striking conversion occurred in the case of the late Canon Kingsley. Though he long took a lively interest in the improvement of the working classes, an interest deepened by his service as government inspector of schools, he opposed obligatory education as un-English and offensive to the independent spirit of his countrymen. On finding

that the working people favored compulsory attendance, his objections vanished.

A still more remarkable change has occurred in the views of Mr. Forster, the father of the Educational Act of 1870. He then opposed the efforts of George Dixon and of the National Educational League to make compulsion universal. Permission only was given to local Boards, wherever they should be formed, to adopt coercion. Though convinced of the justness of this measure, he argued that the people are not prepared for it, and that outcries of "un-English," "arbitrary," "tyrannical," "invasion of one's home," "usurpation of parental rights," and all the easy clap-trap of demagogues, would create a reaction, and therefore he did not ask for a general compulsory law. It was said, no matter what can be done in Prussia, or even in Switzerland, the people of England have too much independence, too much aversion to any semblance of tyranny, ever to submit to compulsory education. Mr. Forster now admits that he had no expectation that the town population would, to so great an extent, adopt the principle of compulsory education. Every town in England with 20,000 inhabitants, which has a School Board, has adopted it. The permissive provision for local compulsion was ingrafted in this bill with little faith that it would be ratified and applied in any of the large towns. But the people have surprised Parliament. In March last Mr. Forster said in the House of Commons: "Almost the entire *town* population of England is now under compulsory education. It might be said the adoption of the compulsory principle was a sudden freak and that there would be a reaction. But as yet there is no sign of reaction. If compulsion had worked with hardship on the people, nothing was so easy as to revert to the former state of things. If a motion were now made antagonistic to this principle of compulsion, *it would not have a single supporter in the School Boards of London, Manchester, Birmingham, or any other large town.*

The school attendance in those towns where it has been made compulsory, has been improved 30 per cent. Leeds, for example, had almost solved the problem of getting hold of all the children. The attendance there has doubled by compulsion. The same has been done at Sheffield. At Stockport they had increased the average attendance until there were less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the children between 5 and 15 who were not at school, and some of them were excusable on account of mental or physical inability. After all, compulsion was merely a declaration by the State that it was the duty of the parent to see that his child was educated. The right to compel a father to feed and clothe his child is admitted, and we have now arrived at a point of civilization at which we can declare that it is his duty to see that he is educated. The sole meaning of compulsion is that this is the duty of every parent, and that it is the business of the State to secure the performance of that duty, and if the parent is disabled by poverty, then to help him from local rates or imperial funds. It has been said, we must wait for public opinion. Well, public opinion has declared itself, for every town that by law was able to do so, has put the compulsory system in force. The fact is, that the arguments in favor of compulsion are overwhelming, and Parliament should now make compulsion universal. It is admitted, you cannot extend compulsion without producing some hardship, and bringing a bitter pinch to some poor widow who depended on her children's labor. No great reform can be effected without cases of individual hardship, but in the long run these alterations would be productive of magnificent results for the whole population."

Another M. P., Mr. Phipps, said in the same discussion: "Every child ought to be educated, and eventually compulsion must be universally employed. Experience already proves that the principle of compulsion is not repugnant to the feelings of the people. Compulsion is an ugly word, and expressed a foreign idea, but it is wonderful how much

the idea had become acclimatized among us. It is the only remedy for the present, and after it had been applied for a generation it would be needed with reference only to the waifs and strays of the population."

The Hon. John D. Philbrick, formerly the efficient Superintendent of the schools of Connecticut and now of Boston, examined carefully the working of obligatory education when recently in Europe. His well-known caution and sound judgment give weight to his opinions. He said: "The experiment in Connecticut is another valuable argument in favor of the principle of compulsion. I fully believe not only in the expediency of this principle as an indispensable element in our system of public schools, but I believe that compulsory education is destined to be absolutely universal in every country that pretends to educate its children. The more I study history, the more I observe the workings of this system at the present day, and the great drift of public sentiment in different countries on this subject, the more strongly I am convinced that the compulsory system will be more and more approved in proportion as it is thoroughly executed."

Mr. Giles Potter, our Agent, has rendered efficient service in securing the observance of the compulsory law. He now (1878) devotes his entire time to this important work. The plan of visiting schools to ascertain the extent of absenteeism from both pupils and teacher has proved very useful during the year 1877. The question: "does any scholar in this school know of a boy or a girl of school age who has attended no school this term or this year?" is very sure to reveal the real facts in each case. These inquiries have increased attendance and served to magnify the importance of the school. The fact that the State is thus enforcing attendance and even looking after individual children has led many foreign parents to a higher appreciation of the school and their own parental duties.

REPORT OF THE AGENT OF THE BOARD.

During the last year I have endeavored to secure the coöperation of school officers and employers in order that the law in regard to attendance at school, so far at least as it relates to children employed in any work whatever, might be fully observed without continued attention from the State Agent. In our manufacturing districts I conferred with school-visitors and employers, and wherever it was practicable made an arrangement whereby some school official should receive the names of the children to be dismissed from employment and see that they attended school regularly for at least twelve weeks. Employers were also requested to keep records of the children employed by them on blanks prepared for that purpose, showing their age, the time they were employed, and when they attended school. Wherever these arrangements were carried out, the results have been very satisfactory.

But in many cases, no *systematic* efforts have been made to carry them into effect. Though employers have not generally kept the desired records, none have refused to give me the information asked for, and I am confident that they will give the same needed information to school-visitors or others whose business it may be to inquire after neglected children. There may be some exceptional cases where employers and parents will desire to have their children continue at work beyond the time allowed by law, with the express understanding that when they go to school, the time of schooling shall be prolonged. In such cases the spirit, if not the letter, of the law may be fully complied with.

Blank certificates like the following are distributed freely wherever they are called for. — Some school-visitors desire to have them given to all the scholars who have attended the full time specified, but general experience favors the plan of giving them only to those who ask for them. Some employers demand them and will not employ a child who cannot produce one. The following is the form now used:

Neglect on the part of parents or other persons having control of a child, to cause such child to attend school as the law requires, is punishable by a fine of **\$5** for each week of neglect.

EMPLOYERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN,

PLEASE DEMAND A CERTIFICATE LIKE THIS IN EVERY CASE.



Town of.....187 .

This Certifies that.....

has attended School for the FULL TIME of *SIXTY DAYS ending the
day of....., 187 , SIX WEEKS of which time
 were consecutive, and may be legally employed for the nine months fol-
 lowing, viz: until the.....day of....., 187 .


<i>This Certificate</i> <i>Teacher.</i>
<i>should be signed by a Teacher</i>	
<i>or School Visitor.</i> <i>School Visitor.</i>

*The law requires *Sixty Days of Actual Attendance*, six weeks at least to be consecutive.

The penalty for employing a child under 14 years of age who has not attended school as the law requires, is a forfeit of **\$100.**

In a few instances employers have been deceived by "borrowed" and even by counterfeit certificates, so that this plan needs to be used with care. That class of parents for which the law was made hardly look three months ahead for the consequences of neglect to comply with its requirements, especially when there are so many ways in which the law can be evaded. Those children whose education is neglected through poverty, indifference, or avarice, must be watched during the time they should attend school by some persons who can appreciate the welfare of the children and the interests of the Commonwealth. Want of such watchfulness is not because public opinion does not approve compulsory education. Mingling freely with the people in all parts of the State, I have found but one man the last year who opposes this law. It unquestionably meets with general approval, and the people are demanding that it shall be strictly executed. In some instances, legal proceedings have been commenced against parents, who after repeated warnings continued to neglect to school their children. But when they once saw the legal papers against them, signed by the proper authorities, they decided to comply with the law. When conversing with negligent parents and seeking to hold up school attendance as a privilege for their children, I have found an allusion to the law would prevail where my mere persuasion had failed.

Proper legal blanks for arrests for truancy have been prepared, and being freely furnished to officers and teachers, these papers have had a salutary effect on some truants who before seemed incorrigible. Though the plans suggested to school officers and employers have not been fully carried out as yet, though indifference or neglect is still shown by some of both these classes, yet the general results of our compulsory law are quite encouraging. It has exerted a decided influence on those whom it was designed to reach, and has greatly increased the attendance in our schools.



In the first four months of 1875, inquiries were made, personally or by letter, at every establishment where there was reason to suppose children might be employed, how many under fourteen years of age were employed, and how many of these had attended school any part of the past year. About 500 establishments were thus inquired of, and in 232 of them, children under fourteen years of age were employed. In 55 of these were children of the age referred to, who had not attended school in the twelve months immediately preceding the time of the inquiry. More than three-fourths of all the children under fourteen years of age were said to have attended school within that time, and one-third of the remainder had been in the State less than nine months, so that the employing of them was hardly a violation of the law. In some cases the only evidence that the children had attended school, was their own statements, and it was by no means certain that they had been in school the full time required by law. But many who had not attended school in those twelve months, had been constant attendants till twelve or thirteen years of age, so that they had conformed to the spirit, if not to the letter, of the law.

There is a growing tendency among manufacturers to discontinue employing young children. They say: "It is not profitable; the children ought to be in school; it troubles us to watch them, and send them out to school, and we do not employ them." One factory employing a very large number of children, had reduced that number two-thirds in eighteen months. The reason assigned was this: "In explaining the education law to our operatives, we have used our best endeavors to impress upon their minds the benefits that children will derive from being educated. Very few object, and those who do, finding we are in earnest to have the law complied with, seek employment elsewhere."

While the general result of the investigation is quite as favorable as could have been anticipated, some employers have shown a surprising lack of knowledge as to the viola-

tions of the law in their own establishments, and when the facts were brought to their notice, have at once applied the remedy. One reason for requesting employers to keep records of children's ages, the time they attended school, etc., was that the children might not be retained at work longer than the law allows.

While attention is arrested by a considerable number of children employed in a few manufactories and stores, it must not be forgotten that scattered all through the State, even in towns where there is no manufacturing, there are children kept from school, employed at home in domestic labors, or on work taken home, in families and at odd jobs, or wasting their time in idleness. The returns concerning these children are very imperfect, and, in some places, the people seem to have become so accustomed to this state of things, as not to see that these children are suffering an irreparable loss, and that the State is liable to be burdened with pauperism and crime, the sure results of ignorance.

During the last ten years, the improvement, in most of the towns, in the schools, and school-houses, the general interest in education produced by lectures and Teachers' Institutes, and the influence of compulsory laws, have greatly increased the attendance in the schools. If any other means can be devised, whereby the number of non-attendants among children of school age shall be still further, and more rapidly diminished, a rich blessing will be conferred on the rising generation and the commonwealth.

Questions are often asked regarding the physical condition of the children employed in factories. The rooms where they work, especially in the factories more recently built, are large and well warmed, though not always well ventilated. The kind of work done, does not admit of a draft of air, yet the air is seldom very impure, though it must, of course, contain small fibers of the material used.

The work done by small children is generally light, such as placing spools, or mending threads. Most of the time

they are on their feet, though they often have time to lounge or sit down. They are generally well clothed, and appear to be quite healthy. Many are very small for their age, and this is characteristic of a large class now employed in factories. It is surprising, in some places, to find so many small children who are over fourteen years of age; and yet it is not a bad indication, for it shows some regard is paid to the school law. Aside from the long confinement and the want of out-door exercise at some other time than late in the evening, there is nothing injurious in the work they do. The chief objection to their working as they do is that they are not receiving that intellectual training without which their bodies, if not their minds, must remain forever dwarfed.

GILES POTTER.

Essex, May 1st, 1875.

During the last year Mr. Potter found but fifty-five establishments where any children had been illegally employed. Fifteen of these employed illegally but one child each, seven but two each, leaving but thirty-three establishments, out of two hundred and thirty-two reporting, which have employed more than two each. A considerable number of these employed but three or four when the returns were made. If the investigation were made to-day, the number of "transgressors" would be fewer still. There are in Connecticut 102 cotton manufactories of all grades and 105 woolen manufactories. In these mills child labor is most available. It is but justice to the many manufacturers who have cheerfully conformed to the law, even when it involved both trouble and expense in securing the needed help, that these statements should be distinctly made. They have a right to claim that the children "dismissed for school" shall not at once be employed in any competing establishment. If any such facts shall hereafter occur, the law should be *promptly and rigidly enforced*.

An incident lately occurred in the largest manufacturing center of Windham County, which illustrates the influence both of the Agent and the Borough Constable, who has faithfully coöperated with him in that place. Mr. Potter had received information that there were twelve children in one of the large mills who had not attended school during the year. The constable replies, "There must be some mistake about this matter. The Superintendent sent out the non-attendants one third each term. I do not think there can be twelve children here who have not attended school. I have spent much time in running after the children the last year, and have made fourteen arrests and returned the children to the school, and have taken a good deal of trouble in this matter and tried to do the work faithfully. But now I will make a thorough sweep, and visit every house, and learn if there are "twelve" non-attendants. I think five is nearer right, but I will report the result."

Certainly the school attendance in the Borough has been greatly increased by the faithful efforts of this officer, and his example is commended to all local school officers.

The gain in attendance since the adoption of our compulsory law, shows the wisdom and value of the enactment, and amply compensates for all the effort put forth to secure its general observance. Besides the systematic work of the Agent, I have kept in view the needs of the neglected children in my visits to towns, schools, and factories, and in conferences with school officers, and in public lectures. The chief trouble has not been with the large manufacturers, who, as a rule, have cordially coöperated with us, but with the far greater number who employ a few children in shops, or stores, or a single one on the farm, or in the family. Our law applies alike to *all* employers of children, to farmers, mechanics, and merchants, as well as to manufacturers. Up to the present date (January, 1878), rigid as is our law, no opposition to it has ever been expressed, so far as I can

learn, either in the legislature, in the press, or in any public meeting. But the law should not relax our efforts at persuasion — in making our schools so attractive, and their substantial advantages so inviting, that none can afford to lose them — so that attendance shall be regarded as a privilege rather than a legal necessity. But when reason, persuasion, and patriotism all fail, coercion should stand in their stead. The law should protect helpless childhood whose rights are sacred. It recognizes the claims of the humblest child to an education as that which the State cannot neglect without detriment to itself, and harm to a human soul. Not even by omission may the State doom a single child to ignorance and its manifold evils. The temporary hardships occasionally incident to the observance of this law, will be counterbalanced a thousandfold by the permanent advantage of both parents and children, but its neglect will inflict lasting evil upon them and the whole community.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

LAWS RELATING TO TRUANCY, &c.

CHAPTER XCVIII.

An Act Amending the General Statutes Relating to Education.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

SECTION 1. The police in any city, and bailiffs, constables, sheriffs, and deputy sheriffs, in their respective precincts, shall arrest all boys between eight and sixteen years of age, who habitually wander or loiter about the streets or public places, or anywhere beyond the proper control of their parents or guardians, during the usual school hours of the school term; and may stop any boy under sixteen years of age during such hours, and ascertain whether he be a truant from school; and if he be, shall send him to such school.

SEC. 2. Any boy arrested the third time under the provisions of the preceding section, shall be taken, if not immediately returned to school, before the judge of the criminal or police court, or any justice of the peace in the city, borough, or town where such arrest is made; and if it shall appear that such boy has no lawful occupation, or is not attending school, or is growing up in habits of idleness or immorality, or is an habitual truant, he may be committed to any institution of instruction or correction, or house of reformation in said city, borough, or town, or, with the approval of the selectmen, to the state reform school, for not more than three years.

SEC. 3. Officers other than policemen of cities shall receive for making the arrests required by the preceding sections, such fees, not exceeding the fees allowed by the statutes for making other arrests, as may be allowed by the selectmen of the town in which such arrests are made; but unless a warrant was issued by a judge of the criminal or police court or by a justice of the peace, the officer shall, before receiving his fees, present to the selectmen of the town a written statement showing the name of each boy arrested, the day on which the arrest was made, and, if the boy was returned to school, the name or number of the school to which he was so returned.

Approved, March 14, 1877.

CHAPTER II, TITLE VIII, OF THE GENERAL STATUTES.

SECTION 1. The parent or guardian of any girl between the ages of eight and sixteen years, or a selectman or grand juror of the town where she may be found may present a written complaint to the judge of the Court of Probate for the district in which such town is, or to the judge of the Police Court of any city where she may be found or to any justice of the peace of such town, alleging that she has committed any offence within the final jurisdiction of a justice of the peace, or belongs to the class specified in the third section of Chapter VI of Title XIV, or in the seventh and eighth sections of Chapter I of Title XI, or that she is leading an idle, vagrant, or vicious life, or is in manifest danger of falling into habits of vice, praying that she may be sent to the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, and such judge or justice of the peace shall, thereupon after notice to her and such other notice as he may deem proper, inquire into said complaint, and on being satisfied of the truth of the allegations therein, may order her to be committed to the custody of such School, until she shall arrive at the age of eighteen years, unless sooner lawfully discharged, and if he finds that she has committed an offence punishable by imprisonment other than imprisonment for life, she may be sentenced to the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, or judgment may be suspended, on such terms, and for such time, as he may prescribe; and said authority may issue a warrant for the execution of such sentence.

SEC. 2. Any proper officer may arrest within his precincts any girl whom he shall judge to be between the ages of eight and sixteen years, whom he shall find in any improper place or situation, and who is, in his judgment liable to be arrested for any of the offences specified in the preceding section, and make complaint and proceed in the same manner as a parent could do under the provisions of the preceding section.



E. STEIGER,
25 PARK PLACE,
NEW YORK.







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